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Mr. *Croswell's*

R E M A R K S

ON THE

Commencement DROLLERY.



B R I E F
R E M A R K S
O N T H E
SATYRICAL DROLLERY
AT CAMBRIDGE, LAST
COMMENCEMENT DAY ;
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE CHARACTER OF
STEPHEN, THE PREACHER,
WHICH RAISED SUCH EXTRAVAGANT MIRTH.

BY A. CROSWELL, V. D. M.
— KIN BOSTON.

*I said of Laughter, it is mad : And of Mirth, What doth it. Eccl. ii. 2.
Whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things
are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever
Things are of good Report ; if there be any Virtue : And if there be any Praise,
think on these Things. Philip. iv. 8.*

B O S T O N :
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BRIEF REMARKS

ON THE

COMMENCEMENT DROLLERY.

THE Day of the Anniversary, being more than ordinary pleasant, there was a vast concourse of people at *Cambridge*. The eloquence, ingenuity, and logical accuteness of a number of the Candidates, were very entertaining : but the *Comic-Buffoonery*, which concluded the forenoon's exercise, and which made the *House of God*, to outdo the *Play-houses*, for vain laughter, and clapping, gave great offence. One may safely

safely say, that in *this part* of the solemnity, there was nothing of that divine assistance which the President pray'd for : *hic Deus nihil fecit* : there was divine preservation ; and that was all.

~~I SHALL~~ take particular notice only of the character of *Stephen, the Preacher*, which produced violent effects on the merry multitude.

STEPHEN is represented as a serious but weak Preacher ; and his *zealous manner* (as well as matter) is mocked on the Stage.

He is so desirous of the salvation of men, that when one received a wound in his body, he hopes the groans proceeded
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from a wounded spirit, and seems glad that the man is under convictions.----- It is easy to see that Stephen personates certain zealous preachers of the Gospel ; that mocking *him*, was mocking *them*; and that spiritual trouble and convictions are mentioned only to heighten the mirth. And it is worth observing, that young *Democritus* who makes sport of these things, was presently after to receive *power from the President* to preach the *everlasting Gospel*.

BUT, as was well observed by a Gentleman, at the time : this satyrical banter was not *well tim'd*. For however it hath been heretofore ; at this day there is as little concern about salvation, at College, or elsewhere, as any one can desire, who calls himself a Christian. Nor can we see any Propriety at all in
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it, unless it is supposed to be dealt out to the auditory, by *way of prevention*. And there is no doubt but such a fleering way of speaking about soul trouble, was very refreshing to some, who desired to be free from it, and made them laugh and *clap* with greater vigour. It was the natural tendency of it to raise in persons a worldly jovial spirit, to make them less sensible of the worth of their souls, and less concerned about the *one thing needful*.

Mr. *Collier* thinks that this was the way by which *Dryden* and some of the Poets corrupted the morals of the nation: they made them *laugh away their religion*, by laughing at the Preachers of it. For however unworthy of the character many Ministers are, yet when any one of these is brought upon the Stage,

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to shake the scenes with laughter, the giddy multitude take advantage from it, to despise *Religion itself*. And how much more, when, as in the present case, they, who are the *fools of the play*, are allowed to be serious men, and desirous of the salvation of others? It would be for the honour of the College to have it supposed, that only the Undergraduates were acquainted with the character of *Stephen*, till it was acted in the Meeting-House.

THERE were also two other ridiculous characters in the *Commencement Comedy*, that of the *Lawyer* and of the *Physician*; which though short and not so high seasoned as *Stephen's*, were very helpful to prolong the mirth. But was there not great impropriety in treating the body of Ministers, and the Fathers

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of the Province in such a ludicrous manner ? For could any thing be more indecent than to entertain them *so long a time*, with fly jokes, and merry conceits, (more adapted to the *Booths* on the *Common*) interrupting their wiser, and more serious thoughts, 'till the laughing, and roaring, and *clapping* was at an end ?

THIS is certain, which is of greater consequence, that such a *continued* mirth, attended with loud peals of laughter, (in which no doubt, some joyned by the force of example, before they were aware of it, and were ashamed of their levity) was contrary to that *gravity* and *sobriety* which the Gospel requires.

A CERTAIN Philosopher observes, that laughter proceeds from pride ; and that when men are *very merry*, they are always *very proud*.

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THIS observation is not groundless : it always holds true of that laughter which is the effect of *aping* and *mimicking* others. Such low and contemptible characters, make us think more highly of our own dear selves, on the comparison (for there will always be a secret comparison :) and our vain hearts being much tickled with this *superiority*, the laughing muscles are set into a violent agitation.

AND as there is always *pride* and *scorn*, and consequently a degree of malice ; so there is sometimes *great cruelty* in *hissing* at our Fellow Christians who are set forth as *spectacles* to divert the company.

THIS diversion is one of those things, of which Dr. *Franck* saith, that

a serious Christian need not trouble himself to find out, whither they are *right* or *wrong* : he may know them to be *wrong* immediately by his *own feeling* ; which *feeling* is not the *cause*, but the effect of a secret judgment passed in the mind of him who hath a tender conscience.

IT is not to be wondered at, that the old Romans gratified their corruptions *this way* : they were mad after *Pantomimes*, who could counterfeit every man's speech and gestures : *these* were the *life and soul* of their feasts and entertainments.

I SAY this is not to be wondered at in *them* : they knew no better : they lived *without God in the world, and without hope*. Christians have not *so* learned

learned CHRIST. However any weaker Christian, from want of consideration, and the example of others whom he esteems, may have his *conscience emboldened* to have fellowship with them in *these vanities* : it is impossible any one who lives *by the faith of the Son of God*, and gets his happiness from *the fountain of living waters*, should have any heart to practice *Buffoonery* himself, or to encourage it in others.

MAY we not therefore hope, that this new Commencement Exercise, which the founders of the Society never thought of, which disgusted the serious part of the auditory, and which was really an affront to both *God and men* : I say, may we not hope it will be treated according to its deserts, and *expelled the College* ?

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THE art of *Buffoonery* is not one of the *liberal arts* : it ought not therefore to be cultivated at *Cambridge* : it ought to be *nipped in the bud*. If not
 ----- *hæ nugæ seria ducentin mala.*

IF Candidates who are about to receive power from the President to preach the glorious Gospel, of the blessed God, must in the face of the country, and in *English* too, be a sort of *Pantomimes*, imitating the mean, and wicked Drolery we had on the last *Anniversary* ; their own *tongues will fall upon them* ; they will *pull themselves down* : and the College will keep sinking lower and lower, in the esteem of all those whose esteem is most to be valued ; I mean serious and conscientious people.

As the College at *Cambridge* belongs to the Province, every one hath a right
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t o speak his thoughts of it with freedom. If the Writer therefore were not empowered *by Charter* to concern himself particularly about the affairs of it, he would have a *common* right to weigh the abovementioned *Antick Performance* in the balance of scripture and reason.

AND as he is persuaded God is *on his side*, he thinks it would be dishonouring so good a cause, if he should so much as seem to hide :

He therefore subscribes,

A. Croswell.

N. B. If any one rises up to defend the College, *with decency*, due notice shall be taken of it.

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